

**USFWS Mission Critical Executive Leader Competencies**

**Executive Leader**

*Vision      Strategic Thinking      Decisiveness*  
*Developing Others      Accountability*  
*Influencing/Negotiating      Political Savvy*

## **ACCOUNTABILITY (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)**

### **Definition**

Assures that effective controls are both developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds their self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities and can be relied upon to ensure that projects within their area of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans while focusing on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

### **Importance**

Accountability application ranges from individual responsibility for setting and meeting high standards for personal performance to the very definition of government workers as stewards of the commonwealth. It is the vehicle through which value is created for the public dollar, and public services are improved. The accountable individual remains in touch with the changing needs of those who are served, and earns their ongoing trust. Accountability is a mark of a mature worker and is dependent on each individual being held responsible for achieving agreed upon outcomes. It is essential to a well-functioning organization that each individual proactively take the responsibility to follow work through to completion, to provide both quality products/services and quality customer service, while meeting commitments in a timely manner and within budget. Government workers must also hold themselves accountable for protecting the privacy of employees, customers and members of the public. The leader is also accountable for the results of their team.

### **How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?**

Since organizational success is predicated on all employees being held accountable for achieving agreed upon outcomes, executives must establish a positive performance culture throughout the organization and develop and maintain a strategic framework for accomplishing the tasks of the organization. They oversee the establishment, development, promulgation, monitoring, maintenance, and enforcement of an organization-wide performance management system. They ensure that organizational work priorities, performance standards, return on investment and time expended are consistent with the overall strategic direction of the organization. Executives work broadly with stakeholders to create a shared vision which balances and reconciles interests. They make sound decisions based on research, benchmarking, and evidence and never allow personal advantage or political pressure to dictate actions or decisions that work against the welfare of the nation.

## Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Serves as a steward of the common good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generates and implements sound strategies to accomplish the goals of the Service.</li> <li>• Does not allow personal advantage or political pressure to dictate actions or decisions.</li> <li>• Ensures that subordinates have the tools and resources necessary to accomplish the Service mission.</li> <li>• Develops strategic plans to allocate resources in a way designed to achieve the highest goals of the Service.</li> <li>• Operates within established policies, regulations and laws.</li> <li>• Promotes innovation, efficiency and greater effectiveness of programs through the use of appropriate business tools.</li> <li>• Implements HR strategies that result in the hiring and development of high quality staff whose skills match the changing needs of the organization.</li> <li>• Makes compelling business cases for programs.</li> <li>• Shares resources with other public and private organizations when beneficial to the Service's mission.</li> </ul>
Takes responsibility for personal performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursues excellence diligently.</li> <li>• Explains performance shortfalls to staff and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Seeks feedback regarding performance.</li> <li>• Seeks self-development opportunities.</li> </ul>
Meets or exceeds standards of excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes a positive performance culture throughout the organization.</li> <li>• Understands and uses benchmarking and other investigatory processes to identify and implement best practices.</li> <li>• Ensures that employee performance plans focus on accountability for results.</li> </ul>

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Develops policy and builds, evaluates, and reforms programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Works with stakeholders to create a shared vision, balancing and reconciling various interests to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency.</li><li>• Consults and utilizes research and experts relevant to the Service mission.</li><li>• Takes a holistic view of the agency mission, looking beyond institutional boundaries.</li><li>• Carries out review and assessment of programs to ensure that they remain relevant, appropriate and effective.</li><li>• Develops and utilizes information systems and processes necessary to support ongoing review, evaluation and performance of programs.</li><li>• Uses lessons learned to make program improvements or to end failing programs.</li><li>• Takes the initiative to share insights, information, effective program models and evaluation results with others.</li><li>• Distinguishes clearly between failure of a policy or program itself vs. operational failures due to implementation and acts accordingly.</li></ul>
Conscientiously assesses and manages risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Takes and supports risks that are ethical, legal, reasoned and commensurate with potential gain.</li><li>• Establishes and communicates clear guidelines for others regarding risk.</li></ul>

## Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

### *Primary Developmental Activities*

- Seek an assignment as the leader/manager in charge of an organization with primary responsibility for managing its budget, people, and achieving its mission.
- Work on gaining substantive experience on projects or initiatives that are national in scope and involve multiple stakeholders.

### *Supporting Developmental Activities*

#### *Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments:*

- Apply for a detail as a field project leader.
- Lead a team in conducting a performance review of another organization.
- Apply for a detail to a performance consulting firm or institution.
- Gain experience in a Planning and Performance shop, perhaps in private industry.
- Gain experience in a Public Affairs position in a headquarters office.
- Gain experience with State, tribal and non-governmental conservation oriented organizations.
- Do not discount gaining experience with private industry organizations and trade associations involved in natural resource use such as:
  - Cattlemen' Association
  - Forest products industry
  - National Association of Home Builders
  - Energy cooperatives
- Apply for a detail at Departmental and/or other Federal departments that are prominently involved in Service issues, such as Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, USGS, Department of Agriculture, Office of Management Budget, CEQ, NOAA Fisheries, or EPA.

### *Training*

- Volunteer to be a coach in the Service's [Advanced Leadership Development Program](#) (ALDP).
- Apply to attend senior grade training opportunities:
  - [The Federal Executive Institute and Management Development Centers](#) of the Office of Personnel Management
  - [Kennedy School of Government](#)
  - [The Brookings Institution](#)
  - [Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program](#)
- Take executive or graduate level training courses in:
  - Systems Thinking
  - Strategic Issue Analysis and Formulation
  - Managing Complex Systems Change
  - Project Management
  - Critical Path Analysis
  - Strategic Planning 101 and greater
  - Public Relations
  - Communications 101 and greater
  - Risk Management
  - Organizational Effectiveness

## **DECISIVENESS (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)**

### **Definition**

Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; makes effective and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; is proactive and achievement oriented.

### **Importance**

As the pace, degree, and “unpredictability” of change escalate, sound, well-informed decisions that are made in a timely manner (often with incomplete data) and with a commitment to action are essential for satisfactory job performance at every level of the organization. Note that decisiveness reflects the skills essential to problem solving together with a resoluteness of character and a commitment to action, unless reliable and credible information arises that requires reevaluation of the decision.

### **How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?**

Executives demonstrate decisiveness by identifying, developing and implementing policies and procedures that encourage decision-making and action orientation throughout the organization. They must balance analysis with action. They must identify and act promptly upon opportunities and threats to the organization while allocating resources necessary to achieve the organization’s mission/goals. They evaluate the potential and actual impact of decisions on subordinate managers, staff members, and external stakeholders. Executives must analyze situations and prepare scenarios for crisis situations that may occur within their sphere of influence to be able to lead decisively regardless of circumstances. To prepare themselves for crucial decisions, they must have the habit of reflecting on past actions and must lead an organization which gathers and analyses lessons learned. Executive leaders must balance courage and wisdom.

## Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Is action oriented and makes timely decisions that keep projects moving towards completion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commits the organization to a course of action and provides the resources to accomplish it.</li> <li>• Thinks and acts quickly and logically even when there are no clear instructions or if the agreed upon plan falls apart.</li> <li>• Formulates objectives and strategies under pressure or in complex situations.</li> <li>• Thinks and acts quickly and effectively in crisis situations when established plans prove insufficient, when the unexpected occurs, and when core values are threatened.</li> <li>• Establishes and empowers trained “action teams” that can respond decisively to crisis situations.</li> </ul>
Possesses self awareness and supportable confidence in one’s knowledge, abilities and experience to form the basis for good decisions and actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickly condenses research and evidence into realistic implementation and strategy.</li> <li>• Demonstrates courage when making difficult decisions.</li> <li>• Responds flexibly when planned actions don’t work.</li> <li>• Consistently chooses process(es) most likely to achieve objectives.</li> <li>• Makes decisions to resolve stale-mates in time sensitive situations.</li> <li>• Is reflective in analyzing outcomes of action and learning from experience.</li> </ul>
Understands the nature of risk and is willing to take reasonable and ethical risks when the need for action outweighs waiting for more complete information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes reasoned, educated, and informed risks to achieve agency/organization goals.</li> <li>• Develops and implements contingency plans as necessary.</li> <li>• Empowers others to take risks, supports them when things go wrong and encourages them to learn from setbacks and failures.</li> <li>• Seeks and implements creative solutions to accomplish the mission.</li> </ul>



Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Uses a range of analytical and intuitive approaches to analyze problems, recognize complex patterns and patterns that are not obviously related, trace implications of decisions, and perceive the impact of various courses of action, taking corrective action where required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounts for underlying issues and implications when making decisions.</li> <li>• Anticipates the need for action, the consequences of acting (or not acting), and the potential problems or opportunities.</li> <li>• Adapts his/her management approach and analysis to make decisions or solve problems based on situational needs.</li> <li>• Takes direct and appropriate action when employee performance is unsatisfactory and/or behavior is inappropriate.</li> <li>• Asks the right questions, at the right time, in order to make an informed decision.</li> </ul>
<p>Holds self accountable. Assumes responsibility for results of decisions even if unpopular or unsuccessful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implements policies and procedures that encourage decision-making and action-orientation.</li> <li>• Accepts responsibility for the consequences of own decisions.</li> <li>• Assumes responsibility for risks taken and actions pursued throughout the organization that are consistent with organization policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Responds appropriately to questions and challenges about a decision by articulating the rationale for the decision.</li> </ul>
<p>Has broad understanding of the organization, its mission, goals and processes that enables one to establish parameters for decisions, to muster resources for action, and to identify and remove obstacles to needed action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has strategic orientation.</li> <li>• Keeps alert to opportunities to enhance organizational effectiveness and acts upon these, even if some risk is involved.</li> <li>• Takes action on both short-term and future opportunities and problems.</li> <li>• Utilizes resources from across the organization to gather data and extract pertinent information.</li> <li>• Identifies and implements actions that produce significant results and that are consistent with the agency's priorities and mission.</li> <li>• Removes obstacles and overcomes resistance in order to achieve objectives.</li> <li>• Shares information and empowers subordinates to make decisions.</li> </ul>

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Understands the importance of influence and communication in obtaining the commitment of others to decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presents key information regarding decisions in accessible ways to full range of stakeholders.</li><li>• Confirms others' understanding of issues, options and actions.</li><li>• Influences others using formal and informal processes to accomplish organizational goals.</li><li>• Develops and implements strategic communications plans to include effectively working with the media.</li></ul>

## Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

### *Primary Developmental Activities*

- Seek a detail or assignment where a decision needs to be made between competing priorities, and develop a plan to accomplish it.
- Consider a detail at the Department level to gain insight into how decisions are made at the Secretary level, how the decisions are communicated to Bureaus, and what the impact decisions have on the organization.
- Seek a Project leader assignment within the Service.

### *Supporting Developmental Activities*

#### *Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments:*

- Engage in a shadow assignment with a designated mentor.
- Participate in executive level decision making sessions.
- While chairing or leading a committee, gain experience communicating an unpopular decision and how the decision will be carried out.
- Experiment with creative and “risky” solutions in your own program.
- Seek out a coach or other role model for advice.
- Meet with local political, NGOs, community and professional groups to build your executive network.
- Read the book “Getting to Yes, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In” by Roger Fisher and William Ury and “Getting Past No, Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation” by William Ury.
- Reflect on whether you state as facts things that are really biases, opinions or assumptions.
- Study other decision makers such as Bill Gates and Winston Churchill. Pay attention to how they made decisions in their life and careers. Consider what things they did that you could apply to yourself.
- Reflect on whether you thoroughly define the problem and do enough analysis before making a decision.

### *Training*

- Seek training in dealing with difficult people and difficult conversations.
- Take training on documenting/taking adverse personnel actions.
- Consider whether facilitation training would help you lead to better decisions.
- Take training on goal setting and establishing priorities.
- Take Executive or graduate level training courses in:
  - Project Management
  - Decision making
  - Leadership
  - Communications
  - Leadership Assessment including decision making

## **DEVELOPING OTHERS (ECQ - LEADING PEOPLE)**

### **Definition**

Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.

### **Importance**

Employees play a critical role in the success and strategic agility of the Service. People will only achieve what they are truly capable of when they are supported by ongoing development initiatives, an organizational culture of learning and idea exchange, and leadership that takes the initiative to help others by providing direction, support, and a positive role model. Developing others is the internal organizational expression of service motivation.

### **How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?**

The executive leader invests in employee development and incorporates it into their budgeting, planning, and operational practices. The executive leader creates and supports an environment and processes that facilitate learning, networking, and broad knowledge-sharing. They ensure the resources are available to develop the Service's employees. They set high expectations for learning and celebrate these achievements. It is essential that executive leaders communicate the importance of learning as part of the organizational strategy for success. They ensure that the resources are available to train managers and supervisors in coaching, enabling them to provide meaningful, and constructive, forward focused feedback. They hold managers and supervisors accountable for the wise management and investment in their employees. Employee development is a top priority. Executive leaders model the values of the organization and of government service.

## Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Establishes, implements and evaluates strategic developmental plans that enhance the capacity of employees to meet the changing demands of the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through a collaborative effort with supervisors and staff, establishes a “developmental” plan for their organization that sets specific developmental objectives and opportunities that are directly linked to organizational results.</li> <li>• Develops a strategic approach that establishes priorities and leverages investments in training and development to achieving agency results.</li> <li>• Identifies mission-critical knowledge, skills and competencies for all levels and establishes objectives and strategies for achieving them.</li> <li>• Develops and implements strategic workforce development plans.</li> <li>• Reviews and updates training goals and processes in light of strategic and organizational changes.</li> <li>• Establishes cross programmatic, inter-agency, inter-governmental, private sector and international developmental efforts.</li> </ul>
Supports an organizational culture that promotes continuous learning and the free exchange of ideas and opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates and models the principle of life-long learning and fosters a learning culture that provides opportunities for continuous development of employees.</li> <li>• Personally participates in developmental activities, not only for their own growth objectives, but also as a reaffirming sign of their commitment to developing others.</li> <li>• Promotes a culture that encourages employees to be open, tolerant, and trusting.</li> <li>• Places a priority on employee developmental activities and supports them through the allocation of resources (budget and time).</li> <li>• Encourages staff to share recent professional experiences in a wide variety of forums.</li> <li>• Ensures wide distribution of information on developmental opportunities within their organization and in others as a means of identifying cross-program developmental opportunities.</li> </ul>

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Coaches others, using effective goal-defining feedback, and follow-through approaches to build others' confidence, commitment, skills and knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides feedback to the employee through performance evaluations.</li><li>• Utilizes performance feedback and other assessment tools to identify strengths and developmental needs.</li><li>• Works with employees to develop follow-through strategies to ensure that what is learned in training and other developmental initiatives is shared and translated into work activity and strategic planning.</li><li>• Provides performance management and coaching tools to managers and supervisors for use with their employees.</li></ul>

## Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

### *Primary Developmental Activities*

- Seek an assignment or extended detail in a supervisory position with responsibility for the development of subordinates and/or significant responsibilities for strategic leadership succession or workforce planning.
- Seek an assignment or extended detail at NCTC or other training organization.
- Through a collaborative effort with staff and leadership, develop and implement a significant development or mentoring program within the scope of responsibilities.

### *Supporting Developmental Activities*

#### *Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments*

- Allow others to shadow you on a recurring basis and work with employees to develop a greater understanding of what they've learned.
- Serve as an instructor/teacher at NCTC or other training facility/organization.
- Consider an assignment or extended detail at NCTC or other training organization.
- Lead significant workforce planning activities within the organization to include employee/leadership development planning.
- Find your own mentor or coach in or outside of the organization, and serve as a mentor for others.
- Focus effort and time on employees who need guidance and support from their leader.
- Subscribe to newsletters about successful organizations and business practices, such as Gallup.
- Actively participate in organizational "retreats" and volunteer to organize one.
- Conduct workshops/brown bag lunches – share your knowledge with others.
- Read books to expand your knowledge base.
- Develop good performance plans for all of your employees with measurable criteria.



- Become more knowledgeable about giving constructive feedback to others. Establish a buddy system so people can get continuing feedback.
- Give the people under your level the opportunity to have assignments outside of their functional area.
- Reflect on whether you are equitable in how challenging work assignments are parceled out in your organization.
- Facilitate teambuilding training for your work group.
- Set aside quality time to spend discussing your employees goals and how they align with organizational goals.
- Volunteer to serve as a formal or informal mentor to a Service employee.
- Be a coach/leader for a community youth group (sports team coach, scout leader, church group leader, etc.)

### *Training*

- Attend a Coaching or Mentoring Course such as “[Coaching for Effective Performance](#)” LED6179 or courses offered by an outside provider, such as the [Center for Creative Leadership](#) or Coach U.
- Apply to be a coach in the FWS [Advanced Leadership Development Program](#) (ALDP) (GS-15 level employees only).
- Consider coaching for the NCTC [Stepping Up to Leadership](#) (SUTL) LED6072 program.
- Serve as a program advisor during the Service’s [Project Leader Academy](#) LED6201.
- Attend performance management training offered by DOIU, NCTC or other provider.
- Attend a leadership development program such as the [Advanced Leadership Development Program](#) (for GS 13/14’s) or National Conservation Leadership Institute or courses offered by outside providers.

## **INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATING (ECQ - BUILDING COALITIONS AND COMMUNICATION)**

### **Definition**

Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals; facilitates “win-win” situations; maximizes use of resources within applicable regulatory limits.

### **Importance**

The essence of successful leadership is embodied in the paired competency of influencing and negotiating which are integral to achieving individual, team, workgroup, and organizational performance at levels beyond those met merely through regulation, compliance, and enforcement. Individuals at all levels with influence skills that include interpersonal skills, facile oral and written communication skills, empathic sensitivity, and technical credibility, exhibit personal authority that is not dependent solely on formal authority. This personal authority enables them to lead change in good times or in times of turmoil. The ability to negotiate facilitates dialog, and thus enhances one's ability to gain cooperation, to develop optimal solutions, to work better with others who may be seen as “difficult,” and to resolve issues that impede organizational or personal success. Through the use of these tools, executive leaders can greatly enhance their effectiveness by building and working through a variety of innovative partnerships.

### **How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?**

The Federal Executive must influence key subordinate managers to act as change agents on behalf of key initiatives; communicate persuasively with factual, well-written support materials to provide a compelling vision; and effectively communicate with Congressional representatives and staffers to secure funding and build support for the Agency's work. Executives are able to “argue” effectively for (or against) change as appropriate; use media advocacy effectively to frame the way an issue is viewed; and establish an overall environment that influences individuals and groups toward organizational goals. They understand and apply sophisticated negotiation methods; build, maintain, and impact large internal and external virtual networks to build collaborative power and to achieve results; and mobilize resources and energies of the organization quickly and logically in crisis situations.

## Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Uses oral and written communication and non-verbal skills to influence behaviors or perceptions constructively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates a clear and compelling vision that provides employees with a sense of direction and which can solicit broad support from key stakeholders.</li> <li>• Maintains the effectiveness of the message and enthusiasm over time.</li> <li>• Maintains the call to service throughout the agency.</li> <li>• Uses media advocacy effectively to change the way an issue is viewed, to create a consistent stream of relevant knowledge, and to motivate others to support the issue.</li> </ul>
<p>Builds strong relationships based on confidence and trust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspires public appreciation for the work of government both through personal example, as well as Agency policies, procedures, products and services.</li> <li>• Inspires customers and subordinates to act at the highest level of honesty and integrity and holds them accountable for it.</li> <li>• Develops broad support for ideas and initiatives.</li> <li>• Conducts forums and listening sessions (both internal and external) to maintain an accurate and current read on citizen and customer issues and needs.</li> <li>• Builds, maintains and impacts internal and external virtual networks to build collaborative power and to achieve results.</li> <li>• Communicates with employees and customers by first listening to their needs, issues and ideas and then relating those needs, issues, and ideas to a proposed solution.</li> </ul>

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Manages, adapts and modifies a wide range of environments and contexts so as to positively influence the achievement of desired behaviors, attitudes or perceptions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steps into the fray proactively, decisively, and willingly.</li> <li>• Deals with pressure, ambiguity and stress to ensure that the organization remains productive.</li> <li>• Reaffirms key values and the importance of the mission in times of change to be a visible anchor for others.</li> <li>• Thinks and acts quickly and logically in crisis situations, mobilizing the resources and the energies of the organization effectively.</li> <li>• Builds an overall organizational environment that supports employees.</li> <li>• Defines a vision for change.</li> <li>• Assesses the quality of the workplace environment and culture.</li> <li>• Provides structure and information that helps employees and organizational units understand how to react positively to new demands and circumstances and how to employ existing resources to fulfill new mandates.</li> <li>• Implements knowledge management systems which keep employees involved, committed and in the loop regarding long-term agency goals.</li> <li>• Debriefs stressful situations as needed.</li> </ul>
<p>Understands theory and practice of negotiation; especially to find common ground and implement win-win solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a strategic understanding of the issues and of how barriers to solutions might be addressed.</li> <li>• Understands agenda setting and uses a variety of strategies, including the media to shape the debate.</li> <li>• Understands the wider economic, social and political costs and benefits of a specific action.</li> <li>• Listens to all positions on an issue and provides opposing viewpoints when and where appropriate.</li> <li>• Knows and understands the context for policy development and can be an effective and active participant.</li> <li>• Understands when demands exceed the capacity of the organization to respond, and, when it is necessary, has the fortitude to say “no” to unreasonable demands.</li> <li>• Effectively communicates with Congressional representatives and staffers to secure funding and build support for the Agency’s work.</li> </ul>

## Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

### *Primary Developmental Activities*

- Consider an assignment as Field Supervisor at a station with a heavy 404 workload.
- Consider gaining Congressional Budget Office experience.
- Consider a Departmental Budget Office detail.
- Work on joint labor-management groups to influence outcomes and effectively contribute to collective bargaining agreement process.
- Volunteer to lead a public meeting/hearing.
- Detail to WO Budget office during budget formulation and passback.

### *Supporting Developmental Activities*

#### *Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments*

- Consider an assignment in an EEO Office.
- Expand your knowledge base by reading books about influencing and negotiation.
- Follow the progress of a state or Federal legislative proposal.
- Reflect on whether additional self development in interpersonal skills is warranted.
- Read the book “Getting to Yes, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In” by Roger Fisher and William Ury and “Getting Past No, Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation” by William Ury.

#### *Training*

- Consider the Institute for Participatory Management and Planning course (Bleiker).
- Consider attending team/group dynamics training at NCTC or from a private vendor.
- Consider attending the following NCTC courses; Interest-Based Negotiations OUT8121, Applying Collaboration to Environmental Issues, and [Effective Facilitation](#) LED5122.
- Take additional ethics training.

## **POLITICAL SAVVY (ECQ - BUILDING COALITIONS AND COMMUNICATION)**

### **Definition**

Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization, approaches each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality, and recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action.

### **Importance**

Political savvy is essential in every organization and is a critical competency in a governmental organization that is buffeted by multiple stakeholders, has limited resources, and operates in the constantly changing dynamics of a democratic political system. Those who are politically savvy have knowledge of the internal and external systems and the ways in which those systems function in both their organization and in the larger political environment. They have a clear sense of mission and maintain a current understanding of the political, social, technological, economic and demographic environment in which they operate. Political savvy and emotional intelligence aid the public servant in building consensus and gaining the cooperation of others, which are essential to partnering, strategic thinking, vision, conflict management, and influencing others. Political savvy is vital at the upper levels of an Agency. It must be learned and skills honed so that departmental and/or organizational policies may reflect public interests, emerging concerns may be integrated into new program policies, and the Agency may be effective and advance its mission.

### **How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?**

Executive Leaders have a strategic understanding of the Agency, and its mission. They maintain a constant awareness of the external environment gathering information on public, political, and internal issues, building support and promoting the agency image using this knowledge of external trends, underlying issues, and political reality to guide and shape the strategy of the organization to achieve maximum impact and effectiveness. The Executive leader is politically adroit in addressing, informing and negotiating buy-in from all key stakeholders, addressing their needs without compromising organizational integrity. They continuously broaden networks of relationships and use media advocacy effectively to shape the way an issue is viewed. Executive leaders assemble coalitions and build broad-based support for initiatives and directives

while advancing federal policy initiatives by integrating them into new program policies that are consistent with the strategic direction of the agency.

### Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Understands the Federal government, the Service, and the systems within the Bureau, including the major functions, departments, and processes within the Service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates the full context of the strategic direction of the Service and the policy development initiatives, structures, mission goals, partnering relationships, and legislative dynamics in the face of evolving environmental realities.</li> <li>• Establishes connections with diverse organizational interests to effectively communicate priorities and strategic direction, build organizational credibility, and generate external support for conservation goals.</li> <li>• Integrates a global perspective in decision making that considers national and international events impacting the agency's capacity to accomplish its conservation mission.</li> <li>• Anticipates resistance to agency positions on issues and takes proactive steps to address opposing arguments through constructive dialog.</li> </ul>
Understands the Agency's mission; knows the issues at the heart of the Agency's policy agenda.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies potential barriers to the accomplishment of the Agency's strategic direction and implements proactive steps to mitigate obstacles.</li> <li>• Creates mechanisms that provide stakeholders with constructive means to express concerns and addresses issues in a manner that preserves the integrity of the organization.</li> <li>• Synthesizes differing perspectives and incorporates feedback to improve Agency responsiveness to constituent issues and mission accomplishment.</li> <li>• Creates a culture that values and pursues customer focused input and feedback about agency policy.</li> </ul>

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Understands the climate and culture of the organization, its formal and informal power structures; recognizes decision influencers; recognizes legitimate limits to the organization's reach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influences the Service's strategy to achieve its conservation goals by taking all internal and external factors into account that affect the ability to accomplish the Service mission.</li> <li>• Demonstrates a keen understanding of the complimentary and competing impacts that Federal agencies, state agencies, tribal governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations have on the ability of the Service to accomplish its conservation goals.</li> <li>• Develops and implements collaborative strategies that leverage the interdependent interests of diverse partners in accomplishing Service conservation goals.</li> <li>• Adapts strategies to preserve important partnering relationships based on changes in organizational capability and capacity.</li> </ul>
<p>Identifies, builds, influences and strengthens internal support bases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informs and negotiates buy-in from all key stakeholders.</li> <li>• Works effectively with elected officials at the Federal, state, and local level and uses knowledge gained from interactions to remove obstacles to mission accomplishment.</li> <li>• Proactively uses diverse media venues to effectively communicate the mission of the agency or address agency criticisms.</li> <li>• Tailors messages that effectively communicate specific aspects of agency policy to targeted audiences.</li> <li>• Uses the media effectively to obtain input and debate about policy issues.</li> <li>• Inspires public appreciation and trust in the agency's mission activities through personal example and agency policies, procedures, products and services.</li> </ul>



## Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

### *Primary Developmental Activities*

- Volunteer for a detail in External Affairs or similar position in a non-governmental organization (NGO).
- Volunteer for a detail in International Affairs within the Service or with another federal agency.
- Work on a high-interest project that requires Congressional support.
- Reflect on whether you are sensitive to others, can read non-verbal signals of others, and know how to get things done inside and outside the organization.

### *Supporting Developmental Activities*

#### *Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments*

- Take a 360-degree assessment tool as a way to receive feedback from others.
- Reflect on whether others trust you and if you are seen as having high integrity.
- Continue to master interpersonal skills and build relationships inside and outside the organization.
- Ensure you know “who’s who” and their roles and responsibilities in the Service and with other outside partners.
- Reflect on whether you are savvy with only select groups. Separate people from the problem.
- Maintain flexibility and resilience, and expect the unexpected.
- Seek out a coach or mentor within the organization. Inquire about shadowing opportunities.
- Attend Congressional subcommittee hearings, and learn as much as you can about the political process through reading and asking questions.
- Practice not “thinking out loud” when others are around.
- Join a local [Toastmasters](#) club to sharpen your presentation skills.

### *Training*

- Attend the [Leadership Challenge Workshop](#) at NCTC or from other outside public vendors.
- Attend training that focuses on influencing and negotiating.
- Attend training at [Federal Executive Institute and Management Development Centers](#) related to this subject.
- Apply for the [Senior Executive Service \(SES\) Candidate Development Program](#) if not already enrolled.
  - Consider the [Center for Creative Leadership](#) for relevant training.
  - Consider the [Kennedy School of Government](#) for relevant training on this subject.
  - Consider [The Brookings Institution](#) for relevant training on this subject.
  - Take executive or graduate level training courses for relevant training on this subject.

## **STRATEGIC THINKING (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)**

### **Definition**

Formulates effective strategies consistent with the mission, vision, and priorities of the Service in a global environment. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities while anticipating potential threats or opportunities.

### **Importance**

Strategic Thinking is the conceptual process that underlies two of the elements most critical for success in any organization—strategic planning and strategic management. It is the apex of managerial and executive thinking and is simultaneously considered both the most difficult and most important challenge for any public or private organization and its leaders. It is imperative that the senior leadership of the Service continually scan the environment and engage in strategic thinking to develop a compelling strategy for the organization, and motivate all within the organization to think strategically, aligning plans and policies to support and promote the Service and organizational mission, vision and priorities.

### **How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?**

Executives must be constantly aware of the external and internal environment and the strengths and weaknesses of the Agency to anticipate and recognize change and its potential impact on long term plans. They reframe the mission and vision of the organization to meet changing priorities in the global economy and understand the interdependencies of longer-term political, economic, global, and social trends. The executive leader uses knowledge of emerging public issues/concerns to develop new program policies that address long-term needs, have a significant impact on public well-being and are consistent with the mission of the agency. They adjust organizational direction to align with shifting national priorities by creating long-range plans to enhance organizational performance and survival and involve both internal and external stakeholders in the planning process. The executive leader establishes partnerships to maximize resource availability and organizational performance, creates a mission- and performance-oriented culture that recognizes and rewards strategic performance and goal accomplishment, links budget to performance, and educates managers in understanding, aligning, and communicating Agency plans.

## Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Understands the organization, its mission, its customers, and its evolving environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influences the Service's strategy to achieve its conservation goals by taking all internal and external factors into account that affect the ability to accomplish the Service mission.</li> <li>• Demonstrates a keen understanding of the complimentary and competing impacts that Federal agencies, state agencies, tribal governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations have on the ability of the Service to accomplish its conservation goals.</li> <li>• Develops and implements collaborative strategies that leverage the interdependent interests of diverse partners in accomplishing Service conservation goals.</li> <li>• Adapts strategies to preserve important partnering relationships based on changes in organizational capability and capacity.</li> </ul>
Plans and works towards long term success, affordability and sustainability employing systems thinking and other analytical forecasting tools to assess risks and prioritize among options, programs, and initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discerns implications of the changing environment on the Service's ability to accomplish its conservation goals and proactively adapts strategies to adjust priorities and address change pressures.</li> <li>• Conceives and implements strategies that integrate Service program areas and leverages internal resources to identify and achieve shared priorities and objectives.</li> <li>• Uses a metrics based approach to assess strategy effectiveness and identify proactive measures to adapt program initiatives to overcome obstacles.</li> <li>• Implements a human capital management strategy that identifies gaps, develops new competencies in the workforce meeting future Service needs, and establishes a culture supporting innovation, creativity, and risk taking.</li> </ul>

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Plans strategic direction for the organization that is consistent with its fundamental purpose/mission and that is based on a holistic view of interdependent internal and external variable factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plans a strategic direction for the organization based on a holistic view of Service priorities and limited resources.</li><li>• Develops Service strategies to support the administration's policy direction and works with the legislative branch to accomplish the administration's goals.</li></ul>
Establishes and values the importance of objectives and performance measures consistent with Service goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develops and implements budget and performance integration strategies.</li><li>• Works with partners to achieve success measures through collaborative initiatives.</li><li>• Identifies opportunities for organizational re-engineering, builds support for organizational change, and restructures assets to align with identified priorities and to improve organizational effectiveness.</li></ul>
Communicates strategies and obtains support for them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Articulates the strategic direction of the organization in a manner that motivates the workforce to accomplish the strategy.</li><li>• Works with internal and external stakeholders to gain support for identified changes and leverage their support with other affected or interested parties.</li></ul>

## Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

### *Primary Developmental Activities*

- Consider an assignment as the leader/manager in charge with responsibility for integrating people, budget and strategic direction and execution.
- Gain substantive experience in national scope projects or initiatives involving multiple stakeholders.
- Consider a detail in the WO Budget Office during budget planning times.
- Volunteer to be an officer in a community group.
- Volunteer to lead a programmatic strategic plan.
- Consider a detail in a WO program planning office.
- Consider a detail in Congressional Legislative Affairs.
- Consider a detail in DOI or another federal bureau.

### *Supporting Developmental Activities*

#### *Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments*

- Gain experience in Service program policy and planning functional units.
- Consider experience with State, tribal and non-governmental conservation oriented organizations.
- Do not discount experience with private industry organizations and trade associations involved in natural resource use such as:
  - Cattlemen' Association
  - Forest products industry
  - National Association of Home Builders
  - Energy cooperatives
- Consider assignments with Departmental and/or other Federal departments that are prominently involved in Service issues including but not limited to:
  - Office of Management & Budget
  - Bureau of Land Management
  - National Park Service
  - U.S. Forest Service
  - Bureau of Reclamation
  - Army Corps of Engineers

- US Geological Survey
  - Department of Agriculture
  - NOAA Fisheries
  - Environmental Protection Agency
- Read books to expand your knowledge base.
- Reflect on whether you have a broad enough perspective to pull together varying elements into a coherent strategic view.
- Are you curious? If not, why not?
- Read numerous strategic case studies in business publications and journals.
- Reflect on whether you are delegating enough day-to-day activities to others so that you could have more quality time to think strategically.
- Reflect on how your short term strategic plan affects the long term plan.

### *Training*

- Consider senior grade training opportunities such as:
  - The Service's [Advanced Leadership Development Program](#) (ALDP) as a coach (GS-15 level only).
  - [Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program](#)
  - [Federal Executive Institute](#)'s "Leadership in a Democratic Society"
  - [Center for Creative Leadership](#)'s "Developing the Strategic Leader"
  - [Kennedy School of Government](#) training
  - [The Brookings Institution](#) training
- Executive or graduate level training courses in:
  - Strategic Management
  - Systems Thinking
  - Strategic Issue Analysis and Formulation
  - Managing Complex Systems Change
  - Advanced Program Management
  - Structured decision making
  - Critical thinking/writing
  - Chaos theory and mind mapping

## **VISION (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)**

### **Definition**

Takes a long-term view and acts as a catalyst for organizational change, creating a shared vision with others and influences others to translate that vision into action.

### **Importance**

The identification and articulation of a vision assists an organization in achieving a sense of purpose. It acts as a catalyst for organizational change and is a prime element in the development of strategic analysis, planning, and management. Strategic Vision and the accompanying analysis, planning, and management provide structure for decision making throughout the organization and are correlated with successful achievement of an organization's goals and priorities. Leaders must be able to communicate their agency's mission, core values and strategic goals to employees and create and sustain a positive workplace that inspires them to support the agency mission and goals.

### **How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?**

Executive leaders must understand the full scope of Service and governmental issues. They develop and promote a shared vision for the organization and partner with all levels of the organization to co-create the vision thereby creating "ownership" of the vision and ultimately drive organizational behavior towards a desired future. Executive leaders must challenge the status quo, ensure repeated actions are taken to overcome obstacles and resistance to change, and embody the desired change through strong, symbolic actions that are consistent with the stated vision of the Agency. They must establish key strategic planning processes to identify needs and opportunities that enable the Agency to remain responsive to changing needs. Executives must establish clear responsibilities and objectives to deliver results, develop and implement guiding coalitions that champion the vision for the organization, and communicate the vision throughout the organization often, widely, and with effective use of a variety of media.



## Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Has a breadth of perspective and a clear understanding of the Agency, its role in the Federal Government, and the full and changing context in which the organization's mission is set.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the full scope of Service and governmental issues so that vision and direction is conceived more in terms of coordinating vs. providing service.</li> <li>• Knows and understands the context for policy development and can be an effective and active participant.</li> <li>• Participates in knowledge and policy networks and ensures Agency participation in such networks.</li> <li>• Has a global breadth of perspective and is able to work and coordinate work cross-culturally, nationally, internationally and globally.</li> <li>• Creates a vision of addressing problems effectively across agencies, with NGOs, and international organizations in a sustained and articulated rather than stove piped fashion.</li> <li>• Promotes an active and dynamic customer focus throughout the organization that is participative, interactive, and proactive.</li> <li>• Is politically adroit in addressing, informing and negotiating buy-in from all key stakeholders.</li> <li>• Solicits, understands, and anticipates the changing needs and expectations of stakeholders and remains alert to opportunities to serve constituents better.</li> <li>• Understands and uses benchmarking and other investigatory processes to identify world-class standards.</li> </ul>
<p>Values and uses systematic scanning and other analytical tools so as to identify and integrate key issues affecting the organization and its service mission into a believable vision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looks at the agency holistically and responds to change strategically.</li> <li>• Conceives and articulates goals which unite people in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts.</li> <li>• Develops and influences the culture, values and structures in delivering and developing improved services and organizational capacity.</li> <li>• Addresses obstacles to change even though it may mean facing hard truths and making tough decisions.</li> <li>• Scans the organization's political, social, economic, environmental, and technological environment for new information and to pick up shifts in relationships, priorities, needs.</li> </ul>

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Anticipates changes and conceives new models for responding to complexity, uncertainty and new realities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes key strategic planning processes that enable the Agency to remain responsive to changing needs.</li> <li>• Looks at the agency holistically and responds to change strategically.</li> <li>• Leads change.</li> <li>• Conceives improvements in terms of qualitative leaps, rather than incremental steps.</li> <li>• Challenges the status quo publicly by competing it against an ideal or a vision of change and takes dramatic and sustained actions to enforce the change effort.</li> <li>• Is an agile, flexible, and innovative thinker.</li> </ul>
Communicates the organization's mission, values and vision clearly, building a shared vision and "orchestrating" individual efforts into a meaningful whole.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a clear and explicit view that signals where the organization is headed and why.</li> <li>• Creates broad ownership of the vision throughout the organization, engendering energy and voluntary engagement which is key to the vision's sustainability.</li> <li>• Develops core teams or guiding coalitions that champion the vision for the organization.</li> </ul>
Demonstrates personal commitment to the organization's mission, values, and vision, and embodies the honesty, integrity, ethics, courage, and personal accountability that engender trust and inspire belief, commitment, and action from others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exemplifies or embodies the desired change through strong, symbolic actions that are consistent with the change.</li> <li>• Steers the agency towards its higher service purpose through the development, articulation and implementation of organizational vision.</li> <li>• Understands the need to serve broader interests, not just independent departmental or agency interests.</li> <li>• Is a visible anchor for others, reaffirming key values and importance of the mission in times of change.</li> <li>• Is a personal source of energy and direction.</li> <li>• Sets direction through vision in a way that broadly inspires trust and confidence..</li> </ul>

## Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

### *Primary Developmental Activities*

- Develop a program vision, then share and “sell” the vision to others.
- Rally supporters for your vision, and create mileposts and symbols that support the vision.
- Volunteer for a detail at the Deputy or Directorate level.
- Maintain a positive attitude and be optimistic about the future.
- Read a book about managing change, and follow the process.

### *Supporting Developmental Activities*

#### *Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments*

- Join your local [Toastmasters](#) club to sharpen your presentation skills.
- Ensure that the behaviors you exhibit show you truly believe in the vision, and “walk your talk”.
- Ask others for feedback using a 360-degree assessment tool or obtain feedback informally from individuals you trust.
- Continue to develop your interpersonal skills and build relationships with others.
- Ensure you understand and are focused on the correct target audience for your message. Adjust accordingly.
- View Martin Luther King Jr’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and reflect on why it was so successful.
- Shadow successful leaders in the Service or in other organizations.

#### *Training*

- Attend the [Leadership Challenge Workshop](#) at NCTC or from other outside public vendors.
- Attend training that focuses on change management and developing motivational skills.
- Attend training at [Federal Executive Institute and Management Development Centers](#) related to this subject.
- Apply for the [Senior Executive Service \(SES\) Candidate Development Program](#) if not already enrolled.

- Attend the [Center for Creative Leadership](#) “Navigating Complex Challenges” course.
- Consider the [Kennedy School of Government](#) for relevant training on this subject.
- Consider [The Brookings Institution](#) for relevant training on this subject.
- Consider executive or graduate level training courses for relevant training on this subject.